

Castlemaine Naturalist

July 2014

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Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



The moss *Tayloria octoblepharum* with spore capsules
Local photo by Noel Young

From Immanuel Kant to the humble *Triquetrella papillata*

The address by Bernard Slattery at the June meeting attracted a large audience. He began by describing the unorthodox attitude which needs to be adopted by the keen moss observer, and contrasted it with the attitude of passers-by on occasions when he was photographing pavement moss on streets of the town; kinder persons asked if he was alright. When asked about the photography, he said that he used good quality 'point and shoot' cameras with excellent macro capability, besting the shortcomings of auto-focus by taking about 100 shots to achieve two or three good ones. Well, you have to be keen to do that, but lets face it, that shot ratio is pretty much what professional photographers do.

Using some of the illustrations from his new field guide, he pointed out some subtle diagnostic features, which at first are hard to comprehend, but are obvious to the expert. Kant was invoked while touching on the realms of philosophy and the strange process of familiarising your mind with new concepts.

One of Bernard's enduring interests is the effect of asset protection burning on the Box - Ironbark forest, and he regularly inspects fire recovery zones to observe changes. He illustrated the progress of particular moss species like *Funaria hygrometrica* that appear in the ash of burnt bush and which help soil regeneration.

He then went on to discuss the relative merits of common and scientific names. In a category like the mosses, the scientific names seem particularly bizarre, and there are few common names, which makes the subject difficult to access.

Mosses of dry forests was developed around species that are both locally occurring and relatively easy for the non-expert to recognise. There are around 40 such species fully illustrated. There may be a hundred more which 'would need a microscope and expertise to name.'

When asked what he thought of the book, a friend of Bernard's assured him it would "bring down Capitalism". This remains to be seen, but it is a must for any field naturalist, if only to gaze at the remarkable close-ups of a world we usually trample under foot without a thought.

- Noel Young

The SEANA spring camp

is to be hosted by **Portland Field Naturalists' Club Inc.**

26 to 29 September 2014

Program Highlights:

Botany - local wildflowers and orchids

Magnificent Coastal scenery, coast heathlands and geology

Aboriginal heritage **Bird-watching** **Enchanted Forest walk**

Glenelg River cruise with evening meal on the riverbank

Seals by the Sea Tours (additional cost)

Harbour cruise and Lawrence Rocks (additional cost and weather permitting)

Junior activities. **Rock-pooling** (tides and weather permitting)

Cape Nelson - Point Danger - seabird watching and nature walk

Registration with full payment must be received by August 31

P.O. Box 470 Portland Vic 3305

Web site: www.portlandfieldnats.org.au

Mid-winter doesn't seem to be the best time to watch ants or other insects. Many species will be passing the season as eggs or unseen juvenile forms and many of our ants will have retreated underground. Yet there will be plenty of insect life to be seen when American photographer and entomologist Alex Wild visits Newstead Landcare to give a presentation on:

How ants run ecosystems in Australia and around the world

3:30pm Sunday 6 July

Newstead Community Centre

Presented by Newstead Landcare in conjunction with the Norman Wettenhall Foundation and Connecting Country.

Alex is a research scientist specialising in insects, especially ants, but also beetles, bees, wasps, and various other arthropods. He is also widely known as an insect photographer and teacher of macro photography - his photographs appear in numerous natural history museums, magazines, books, television programs, and other media. If you are interested in ants, insect photography or a good natural history tale, mark this date in your calendar. Meanwhile, you can see more of Alex's work at www.alexanderwild.com.

Nature Notes

Geraldine Harris

On Mt Alexander large patches of Rock Fern *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia* are responding to the autumn rain. Wattles are beginning to brighten up the bush with Spreading Wattle *Acacia genistifolia*, Rough Wattle *Acacia aspera* and Golden Wattles *Acacia pycnantha* already in flower. In my garden the Correas and Grevilleas are providing nectar for the Spinebills, White-plumed Honeyeaters and Eastern Rosellas. Tall Bluebells *Wahlenbergia stricta*, Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioica*, Cranberry Heath *Astroloba humifusum* and some Sticky Everlastings *Xerochrysum viscosum* are starting to show. So keep a watch out for new species appearing and take along one or two of our very informative local pamphlets (see listed below) to help you identify what you see. These can be purchased for a small amount at monthly meetings and also in the Castlemaine Library and the Information Centre.

Acacias

- Bird list of Mt Alexander Shire
- Castlemaine Chewton Native Plants
- Castlemaine Plants for Castlemaine Gardens
- Common Native Grasses
- Common Orchids of the Castlemaine District
- Egg and Bacon Peas of the Goldfields
- Eucalypts of the Castlemaine District
- Ferns of Mt Alexander Shire
- Geological Features of the Castlemaine District
- Mistletoe of the Castlemaine District
- Mt Alexander Plant List
- Native Trees and Shrubs of Castlemaine
- Weed List for Castlemaine District

The combined Fungi excursion at Blackwood

Noel Young

On June 7, three CFNC members joined Les Hanrahan and many others from Ballarat and other clubs on a productive foray on tracks adjacent to the Garden of St Erth. Geraldine worked hard on listing the species identified, and ended up with a list of around 50 to 60 fungi. I concentrated on photographing as many as I could, while Geraldine endeavoured to note these on her list - a difficult task as she had to be in two places at once - up front with Les identifying species while I was often further back with camera on the ground and knees in the mud. There was plenty of variety, though not all were good specimens.

Back home with Geraldine's list and references* I managed to identify most of them, but some will remain a mystery for now. A few examples follow overleaf.

*Bruce Fuhrer 2005 - Field guide to the Australian fungi

Alison Pouliot - Fungi of the Wombat Forest and Macedon Ranges (brochure)



Trametes versicolor - Rainbow bracket, and *Mycena cystidiosa* - Tall Mycena



Phellodon niger

Hypholoma sp.



Exposed mycelium and tiny fruiting body (right) of *Cortinarius globuliformis*



Hypholoma sp., *Mycena epipterygia* 'Yellow legs', *Tremella fuciformes* 'Jelly fungus'



Mycena interrupta 'Pixie's Parasol', and *Xylaria hypoxylon* 'candle snuff fungi'



Mycena nargan

Ramaria salmonicolor
'Salmon coral fungus'

Podoserpula pusio
'Pagoda fungus'

Nocturnal Trauma

George Broadway

A well-known resident of Guildford has had a family of swallows nesting in the ceiling of her house. Recently she was disturbed by agonised screaming coming from the nest. On investigation it was found that one of the young swallows was being attacked by an Antechinus which had seized it by the neck.

The owner of the house rescued the bird by flinging a torch at the attacker which thereupon released its victim and retreated from the scene. The victim was gathered up by the owner and placed in protective custody for the remainder of the night. It is reported that it is making a good recovery.

Less is known of the antechinus which probably would have been a mother with a young family to support. It is not known whether she found alternative sustenance elsewhere that night.

Observations

At the June meeting -

- ◆ Rita reported Golden Wattle flowering very early between Castlemaine and Bendigo, and a White-throated Tree-creeper around the house for the first time in at least 10 years
- ◆ At 4.50am Tuesday Geraldine heard the distinctive call of a Koel in the Yellow Box outside her house in Barkers Creek. Although she had a visit last spring, this is a rare observation for this time of the year
- ◆ Rita described how she recently saw wren-like birds flit across the Expedition Pass road which she could not identify. They appeared very dark in colour (in sunlight) and one had some bright red on the tail
- ◆ John Alexander, who lives in Mia Mia road, has Rainbow Lorikeets in his garden - George Broadway
- ◆ Anne Van Gemert saw an Emu on Stephensons track (off Etty St.) Chris remarked that Emus have been officially extinct in the area for many years, but have been re-introduced a couple of times, notably at Sutton Grange, and some of these are still surviving.
- ◆

Later -

- ◆ Rita has seen lots of White-winged Choughs in large flocks
- ◆ Chris Timewell and Max Schlachter have seen a **Rose Robin** at Moonlight Creek in Kalimna Park
- ◆ With the delayed winter, many reports of flowering plants such as Sticky Everlastings and Downy Grevillea
- ◆ June 25 - a flock of over 100 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew south over Wesley Hill in the afternoon - Noel Young
- ◆ Nigel has lots of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters and Eastern Spine-bills around his place

From the business meeting

In accordance with our policy of referring requests for funds to our individual members, please consider the following

Trust for Nature asks for donations to support their ongoing task of managing over 100,000 Ha of land in Victoria, currently including a campaign of fox-baiting to reduce the take of small native mammals like the Fat-tailed Dunnart. details: - www.trustfornature.org.au ph03 8631 5888

Two separate campaigns from **Victorian National Parks Association**

- 1. Beach and coastal habitats** - we "need your help to pay for the campaign we plan to run this year to get protection of our coasts and beaches on the agenda for this year's state election"
- 2. Support legal action to get Cattle out of the Alpine National Park**

Further information **VNPA** at www.vnpa.org.au

Look for the correspondence for the above on the table at the general meeting or ask the Secretary

Hot off the press: NCCMA has just released a new plant brochure
"Kyneton Woodlands Flora Identification Guide"

Don't miss our July speaker

DAVID HOLLANDS returns once again with fascinating tales of his encounters with birds during a lifetime pursuing them with cameras.

The author of several bird books, notably on raptors and night birds, David will talk about his most recent production - 'Waders: the shorebirds of Australia', co-authored with Clive Minton

Support you Newsletter

We are always in need of articles, photos, observations, anything relevant to natural history, especially local.

If it's of interest to you, it is sure to be of interest to others.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists

Coming events

Fri July 11 meeting: speaker DAVID HOLLANDS on shorebirds

Sat July 12 field trip: Ellis Falls

Sat August 2 Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater survey. Meet 9am. at Duke St. Leader Chris Timewell

Fri August 8 meeting: speaker GRAEME WATSON - Australian mammals

Sat August 9 - Roadside clean-up, Pyrenees Highway - meet 9am. at cnr Pyrenees Highway and Willy Milly Rd. (Tait Decorative Iron)

Contact: Geraldine Harris

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website - <http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/>

Subscriptions for 2014

Ordinary membership: Single \$30, Family \$40

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2014 Committee

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|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------|
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